

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T STATE 032458

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, VS, VN

SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS OF VIET-NAM

REF: ROME 1698

FOR ROME (ILLING):

1. WE APPRECIATE VERY MUCH YOUR INFORMATIVE REPORT
(REFTEL).

2. IN YOUR FUTURE MEETINGS WITH CASAROLI YOU SHOULD
REITERATE, ON AN OFFICIAL BASIS, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION
REMAINS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO CONTINUING REQUIRED ASSISTANCE
FOR VIET-NAM, NOTING SPECIFICALLY OUR CURRENT MAJOR EFFORT
TO OBTAIN DOLS 300 MILLION IN SUPPLEMENTAL MILITARY AID
FOR FY 1975. YOU SHOULD INDICATE THAT AT THE INSTIGATION
OF THE PRESIDENT THE CONGRESS EXPECTS TO SEND A DELEGATION
TO VIET-NAM WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO TO MAKE AN ON-THE-
SPOT ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION.

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3. BEYOND THIS YOU SHOULD EMPHASIZE TO CASAROLI THAT THERE

IS NO QUESTION IN OUR MINDS THAT THE GVN AND THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE PEOPLE INTEND TO CONTINUE DEFENDING THEMSELVES

AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY PRESSURES AND THAT THEY
WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO WITH THE CONSIDERABLE EFFECTIVENESS
THEY HAVE DEMONSTRATED IN THE PAST. OUR ASSESSMENT IS
THAT, WITH THE ADDITIONAL DOLS 300 MILLION, THE GVN WILL
VERY MUCH BE ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE
ATTACKS. AS NOTED ABOVE, WE ARE MAKING AN ALL-OUT EFFORT
ON THE SUPPLEMENTAL AND ARE REASONABLY CERTAIN OF GETTING
A GOOD PART OF IT. IF THE CONGRESS SHOULD TURN DOWN THIS
REQUEST, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE SOME EROSION OF THE RVN'S
DEFENSE CAPABILITIES BY THE END OF THE CURRENT DRY SEASON
IN MAY-JUNE, WHICH WOULD FORCE THE SOLDIERS OF THE RVN
TO SUBSTITUTE BODIES AND BLOOD FOR THE AMMUNITION THEY
SHOULD HAVE. WE DO NOT FORESEE AN RVN MILITARY COLLAPSE
IN ANY CASE.

4. IN YOUR CONTACTS WITH THE VATICAN YOU SHOULD CONTINUE
TO MAKE OTHER SALIENT POINTS WITH REGARD TO THE VIET-NAM
SITUATION; E.G. THE FACT THAT IT IS THE COMMUNIST SIDE,
NOT THE RVN, THAT IS THE MAJOR VIOLATOR OF THE PARIS
AGREEMENT; THE FACT THAT THE RVN ON SEVERAL RECENT
OCCASIONS HAS URGED A RESUMPTION OF THE TWO-PARTY POLITICAL
AND MILITARY TALKS (WHICH WERE UNILATERALLY CUT OFF BY THE
COMMUNISTS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO) ONLY TO HAVE THESE APPEALS
REJECTED BY THE OTHER SIDE. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD ALSO BE
USEFUL TO REITERATE THE ELEMENTAL MORAL AND HUMANITARIAN
ASPECTS OF THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE IN VIET-NAM, THE WILL
OF A PEOPLE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES DESPITE PROBLEMS OF
REFUGEES AND OTHER WAR VICTIMS WHICH THE RVN HAS MANAGED
WITH LIMITED RESOURCES BUT WITH REMARKABLE SUCCESS. AS
FATHER RIEDMATTER WHO WILL HAVE JUST RETURNED TO THE
VATICAN CAN ATTEST FROM HIS PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS, YOU
SHOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE THE DISQUIETING PROSPECT OF
RETRIBUTION SHOULD THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SUCCEED
IN IMPOSING A MILITARY SOLUTION.

5. YOU SHOULD ALSO NOTE HOW HELPFUL THE SIGNAL COMMENT
BY FEDERICO ALESSANDRINI (ROME 785) HAS BEEN BOTH IN
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SAIGON AND WASHINGTON AND WE HOPE THAT KIND OF
ARTICULATION OF VATICAN CONCERNS MIGHT BE REPEATED. YOU
SHOULD CLOSE BY OBSERVING THAT OUR OWN ANALYSIS DOES NOT
RPT NOT "INDICATE BALANCE MAY BE IRRETRIEVABLY SHIFTING
AGAINST DEMOCRATIC FORCES." WE BELIEVE THE CONTRARY
TO BE TRUE.

6. UNLESS YOU SEE OBJECTION, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD ALSO BE

USEFUL FOR YOU TO HAVE A FRANK TALK WITH RVN AMBASSADOR
HIEU TO SHARE THE ABOVE ASSESSMENT AND TO SUPPLEMENT

WHAT MUST BE AN INADEQUATE FLOW OF INFORMATION FROM THE
GVN. A SHARING OF THIS INFORMATION, WHICH YOU MAY WISH
TO DO REGULARLY, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE HELPFUL TO HIEU
IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE VATICAN.

7. WE WILL BE BRIEFING AMBASSADOR LODGE ON THESE MATTERS
AND ANTICIPATE HE WILL BE FOLLOWING UP ON THEM DURING HIS
VISIT TO ROME NEXT MONTH.

8. FOR SAIGON. IF YOU BELIEVE IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE,
YOU MIGHT FIND THE OCCASION TO QUIETLY DISCUSS WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER BAC THE POINTS NOTED IN PARA 6 ABOVE. INGERSOLL

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